

NIE 100-5-59 ADVCON

3 February 1959

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FREE WORLD
AND THE COMMUNIST BLOC
OF GROWING NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES

NOTE: This is an advance copy of the conclusions of this estimate as approved by the United States Intelligence Board. The complete text will be circulated within five days of this issuance.

EFFECTS OF THE NUCLEAR SITUATION ON:

■ Popular attitudes towards:

- nuclear weapons testing and controls
- possession and use of nuclear weapons
- alliances and neutralism
- consequences of nuclear war
- effectiveness of deterrents

■ Government policies relating to:

- alliances, alignment, and neutralism
- possession and use of nuclear weapons
- defense of national interests

Central Intelligence Agency

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Submitted by the

DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate: The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and The Joint Staff.

Concurred in by the

UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD

on 3 February 1959. Concurring were The Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State; the Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army; the Director of Naval Intelligence; the Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, USAF; the Director for Intelligence, The Joint Staff; the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense, Special Operations; and the Director of the National Security Agency. The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB and the Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, abstained, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

C E N T R A L I N T E L L I G E N C E A G E N C Y

3 February 1959

SUBJECT: NIE 100-5-59: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FREE WORLD AND
 THE COMMUNIST BLOC OF GROWING NUCLEAR
 CAPABILITIES

THE PROBLEM

To estimate the effects of increasing capabilities for nuclear warfare on public attitudes and behavior and on national policies in the Communist Bloc and the Free World.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The impressive developments in nuclear weapons delivery systems over the past year or so have not produced basic changes in popular attitudes in the non-Communist world. These attitudes continue to reflect a mixture of apathy and fatalistic resignation, fear of the consequences of nuclear war, and, particularly in Western Europe, acceptance of nuclear weapons as essential to defense and national status and prestige. In the main, peoples and governments appear to

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be making a gradual and steady adjustment to the threats inherent in the existence of nuclear weapons and we believe that future developments are not likely to produce any sudden or marked changes in present attitudes and policies.

2. It is possible however that the wedding of nuclear explosives with ballistic missiles will produce fundamental shifts in these attitudes and official policies. Such changes could come with little warning in the midst of a crisis situation which served to crystalize the ferment, fears, or newly formulated concepts of the age.

3. Opposition to the testing of nuclear weapons continues strong throughout the world, especially in Japan, India, and in parts of Western Europe. But in most western countries this opposition is subordinated to the view that nuclear weapons are essential to defense and that a test ban should be made effective by measures of inspection and control. There is great interest in disarmament, including various propositions for disengagement, as a means of reducing tensions and the dangers of war. By-and-large, the public demands caution in situations involving the risk of great power involvement and there is considerable support for UN intervention to observe, control, and police areas in which there is a threat to the peace.

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4. Most non-Communist governments display similar attitudes of caution and concern over the nuclear situation. In Asia and the Middle East the nuclear situation continues to reinforce neutralist sentiments which derive from cultural and other factors. The Western European governments are highly sensitive to popular pressures for measures to reduce the dangers of war, and they consider it necessary, and even desirable to explore possibilities for negotiations with the USSR.

5. Nevertheless Soviet pressures and advances in weapons technology have not caused these governments, and others in the free world depending on the US deterrent, to alter their posture or alignment. Many governments, including those of the NATO powers, are able to lead the public to accept the proposition that participation in an alliance whose strategy rests on the maintenance of a nuclear deterrent is the best guarantee of security.

6. The rapid pace of technological development will create serious problems for the US and the world. There may be doubts as to who has the lead in modern weapons, and it may become increasingly difficult to convince the peoples and governments of Western Europe -- and other parts of the world

-- that the deterrent is in fact effective. Fears of a surprise or "pre-emptive" Soviet attack may grow. In those nations which depend upon the US for protection, fears may also increase as to whether the US remains willing to risk general nuclear war in order to defend their vital interests. In view of the foregoing, certain nations might lean toward neutralism in an effort to gain security through accommodation.

7. A period of rapid change in weapons development and of uncertainty as to the relative balance of military power could put an increasing premium on striking the first blow. As the time period required for preparation of a devastating attack diminishes, the problem of interpreting the intent of the other side -- particularly during periods of crisis when precautionary military activities had been initiated by both sides -- will become even more critical. The relatively greater certainty of retaliation resulting from the development of mobile missile systems or hardened sites would strengthen the operation of the deterrent on either side. Even so, either side might decide that the deterrent effect of the other side's strength or posture was outweighed by the necessity to launch the first strike as the best hope for survival.

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8. Barring an effective disarmament agreement, there will probably be a gradual spread of nuclear capabilities to some additional countries. Nevertheless we do not foresee any early lessening of the present strong political and psychological restraints on their use.

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